

**Erie County Fire Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
March 30, 2006**

Call to Order & Opening Prayer

Roll Call:

Chairman Gerald Wittington	Present	Co-Chairman Douglas Larkin	Present
Sec./Treasurer John Wicka	Present	Dennis Allen	Present
Bruce Atkins	Excused	Charles Bethge	Present
William Boldt	Excused	Todd Catalano	Present
Donald Connolly	Present	Jim Fyock	Present
Dennis Gibbs	Present	Christopher Higgins	Present
Daniel Kamman	Present	Michael Lombardo	Present
James Lawida	Present	Richard Litfin	Absent
Richard Mariani	Present	Steve Matisz	Present
Robert Mueller	Present	James Pluta	Present
Edward Saternus	Present	Charles Stewart	Present
William G Szewc	Present		

Also in attendance were Deputy Commissioner Jim McCullough, Deputy Fire Coordinator Tiger Schmittendorf and Brian Benstead from OFPC.

Commissioner's & Committee Reports

Commissioner's Report: No report

Deputy Commissioner's Report: Deputy Commissioner presented his report, which is attached. In addition to the Deputy Commissioner, Tiger briefed the board on the following:

- 10 county fire instructors took the Fire Instructor 1 course. Almost all of the county instructors are now certified to the state level.
- He will generate the next schedule of courses once the current courses scheduled are completed.
- Tom Partridge suffered a stroke last week. He is home from the hospital, resting comfortably and has no lasting effects.
- Jim Koral will be going for surgery and will be out of service for a period of time.
- He is now posting class confirmations on the county's web site. There is too much work and time involved faxing the confirmations to the numerous fire departments and the department in down to one fax machine.
- Looking at a May 1st tower opening date.

WG Szewc advised he looked over the list prepared by Deputy Commissioner regarding needed building repairs and advised it looks complete.

D Larkin questioned if an outside firm or a county engineer is looking at the live burn building. Deputy Commissioner McCullough informed him that an outside firm is being used to assess the damage to the building.

R Mueller questioned if there are problems with the fax machines as he has been advised that chiefs are having a hard time getting faxes through into the fire safety office. Tiger advised that one of the machines went down and they only have one machine to both send and receive faxes. They are working on getting a second machine to eliminate the problem. R Mueller also inquired about whether the website is up-to-date with the FAB minutes. Tiger advised that additions since 1/1/06 were lost when a update was put in place but they should be back up to date in a day or so.

Reading of Minutes of Previous Meeting: A motion was made by C Bethge, seconded by D Larkin to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was duly voted on and carried.

Officer Reports:

Chairman's Report: G Whittington reported on the following:

- He attended two meetings. The charter review committee and a technical committee on 800 MHz. With respect to Charter Review, the process is proceeding well. All agencies involved are working together and agree with the recommendations being advanced that appointments of commissioner and deputy commissioner positions will not be made by the County Executive but will be placed with the trustees of

the Public Safety Board. He listed the proposed entities whose representatives will make up the trustee board. They include the following: Buffalo Police, Buffalo Fire, Erie County Police Chiefs (less than 40 member departments), Erie County Police Chiefs (more than 40 member departments), Erie County Sheriff, Assoc. of Towns, Erie County Legislature, Fire Advisory Board, EMS Advisory Board, ODP Advisory Board, NFTA Public Safety, Public Safety Training, E-911 Board and a representative from the Erie County Executive. Discussions are ongoing as to how the different entities will work and develop budgets. The process is still on schedule to be presented by the subcommittee to be scheduled for the November 2006 general election mandatory referendum. Commissioner Lombardo clarified the City of Buffalo's position as to why they feel that "contracts" need to be addressed when some of their operations (dispatching) move to the county's Public Safety Campus. R Mariani read a draft press release being developed by E Guren pertaining to the proposed merger and how it will affect public safety operations in Erie County.

Co-Chairman's Report: Nothing to report:

Secretary' Report: Nothing to report

School Committee: C Stuart reported that a committee meeting was held to discuss needs and wants with respect to upcoming schools and courses. There has been some discussion about Erie County moving to a MTO (Municipal Training Officer) operation but this needs to be researched and discussed in further detail.

Drill Towers Committee: WG Szewc reported that much of his report was covered in Deputy Commissioner McCullough's report. He would like to be part of the meeting when he meets with the engineer to look at the buildings.

J Pluta questioned if the recently certified individuals who completed the Fire Instructor 1 course would be allowed to use the training towers to conduct individual department training evolutions. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised, No, since they need to be either a county or state instructor. Tiger advised that Fire Instructor 1 is a general instructor and not specific to certain qualifications needed to train tower evolutions. A discussion followed and it was decided to have the Drill Tower and School committees discuss this and come back with recommendations. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised there is a process to follow to get these new instructors familiar with county requirements, etc. WG Szewc advised that there are other requirements that are called for by the state. It would be too easy to deviate from these requirements if all who are instructing at the towers are not working on the same page

Radio Committee: G Whittington reported that work is progressing on 800 MHz. Infrastructure design continues and a new Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) presentation is in revision. Issues being clarified are the one-for-one radio exchange, system maintenance, timetables and other items. More presentations will be scheduled in the future when the FAQs are updated. He reminded everyone to take back to their respective organizations to make sure the radio surveys are completed and returned to the county. More planning with towns and companies will take place down the road and there are many issues under review and in discussion. The time frame remains on target.

With regard to the alerting project, J Wicka briefed the board. Work continues to progress and design and planning continues. A new presentation is being prepared. Due to the needs of the county public safety community, the proposed alerting device is being refined and upgraded by the lead manufacturer. It incorporates improvements that are essential to public safety use. He will be attending another tech committee meeting on March 31.

Legislation & Fire Prevention: There was a brief discussion with regard to inviting the County Legislature's Public Safety Committee to the next FAB meeting. A motion was made by WG Szewc, seconded by C Bethge to send an invitation and ask the committee members to attend the next meeting. The motion was duly voted on and carried.

Budget & Wall of Fame: There was a discussion on feedback received on the FAB's letter to the Legislature and County Executive regarding additional clerical staff for Fire Safety. Some groups and entities sent letters and others are waiting for a template to use to prepare their letters. It was decided that the secretary should forward a copy of the letter to all FAB members for their use in sending additional letters to the legislature and county executive.

W G Szewc reported he spoke with Legislator John Mills regarding this issue and he requested Bill get back to him if the situation does not improve. Bill intended to report back to the legislator that additional assistance is still needed.

Also discussed were the following:

- The committee is finalizing acceptance qualifications for the Wall of Fame and should have something in the near future.
- The committee is working with the School and Drill Tower committees to develop a long-term plan on training, computer technology, facility upgrade and maintenance and other issues. It is hoped to make this part of the funding requirements for Fire Safety in future budget requests.

Rules & Mutual Aid: G Whittington advised once the Charter Review revisions are completed we will need to address this in great detail. The by-laws will need major revisions in addition to making a current change about the starting time of the meetings. The secretary was requested to begin the process on this for the next meeting.

Erie County Chiefs: R Mariani reported of his work on preparing the letter with E Guren and also that Pete Casey is ill due to eye problems.

Erie County Vol. Firemen's Assoc.: J Wicka advised he will be sending a letter to the organization reminding them of the process of selecting a replacement to D Carrier, who resigned due to health considerations.

Fire District Officers: No report

Fire Police: No report.

Reading of Correspondence: The correspondence was read and those items needing further attention were held over for either old or new business.

Old Business

Instructor Meeting: G Whittington requested Deputy Commissioner McCullough to schedule the county instructor meeting and include members of the School and Drill Tower committees.

New Business

Staff Cuts / Rural Metro: W G Szewc advised that Orchard Park companies are experiencing problems with extended hospital runs. This stems from the fact that Rural Metro has staff reductions effecting ambulances available to Orchard Park. It was discussed that the EMS Advisory Board needs to be made aware of this and address the concerns. Some of the problem is that South Buffalo Mercy refuses to go to a "Red" status. G Whittington advised he will speak with the Chairman of the EMS Advisory Board and let him know of our concerns with this issue.

Treasurer's Report: Prior balance was \$261.86. Tonight's receipts were \$17.00 with a new balance of \$278.86. A motion was made by D Kamman, seconded by W G Szewc to accept the report as presented. The motion was duly voted on and carried.

Adjournment:

Prior to adjournment, Brian Benstead from OFPC addressed the board on four issues. They were:

- OFPC is working on NIMS Train-the-Trainer programs. They are looking for candidates willing to become trainers.
- Fire Resource Inventory System for individual fire departments is up and running. Departments can go on-line and update their equipment and resource inventories and run reports on the same and other available resources. Watch for further announcements on this in the future.
- Certified Fire Instructor and distance learning. They are looking at the possibility of working with BOCES to conduct on-site courses so that individuals can take training from different locations via video. This will be for specific, non hands-on classes. They are trying to get this in place for this fall.
- Firefighter training records are available on request from OFPC. Chiefs can send Brian an e-mail at BBENSTEA@dos.state.ny.us to request records.

Commissioner Lombardo offered to hold future meetings in the city and offered the use of the Edward Cotter fireboat for a meeting site in the summer. Everyone felt this was a good idea and will be planned for the coming summer.

With no further business to conduct, W G Szewc made a motion, seconded by R Mariani to adjourn the meeting. The motion was duly voted on and carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:57.

Respectfully submitted
John R. Wicka
Secretary/Treasurer